

GP and presenter for Channel 4 series, Embarrassing Bodies, Dr Pixie McKenna shares her advice and tips on how to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles.

Six Tips for a Problem you can Fix

1. Doctors are always advising us to give our pelvic floor a work out, but "working out" where it is in the first place can be a bit of a task. **Find your pelvic floor by stopping yourself urinating mid flow.** These are the muscles you need to squeeze. Don't do this repeatedly as it can result in other problems like urinary tract infections, it is simply a way of finding out where you should be focusing your attention.
2. Pelvic floor exercises can be done anywhere from the bus stop to the bathroom. However when you are starting out on your strengthening journey, **take time to ensure you are doing them correctly.** I suggest to my patients to sit on the toilet seat with their feet firmly on the floor. Once you have mastered the technique feel free to multitask and work that pelvic floor wherever you are.
3. When you are contracting your pelvic floor muscles it should feel like you are not only squeezing them but also lifting them up. **Don't be tempted to squeeze your buttocks or thighs** but do exert little tension around the back passage as if you are trying to prevent yourself from passing wind.
4. When you are starting off simply squeeze the muscles for a second or two then relax. **Over time build up your tone** by increasing the tensing time in increments up to 10 seconds, slowly relaxing the muscles as you release the tension. Next you should aim to do the fast twitch exercises. With these ones you squeeze and pull as before but only hold for one second then relax.
5. **There is no quick fix.** It takes several weeks of regular exercise to begin to regain the strength in your pelvic floor and many months to see a discernible difference. An added bonus of doing a pelvic floor work out is that not only does it help with a bothersome bladder it can also increase your sensitivity during sex. But remember once these exercises restore your pelvic floor function, don't stop doing them! If you don't use it you lose it! Like every other muscle the pelvic floor will start to slack if it doesn't get a work out!
6. **Remember you aren't alone.** One in four women over the age of 40 is suffering just like you. For those who are too busy or too embarrassed to ask for help or simply unsure about what to do what do do, help is at hand. Since PeriCoach measures the direct force of the muscles, it acts as your very own pelvic floor personal trainer! It helps you manage and monitor your pelvic floor weakness, putting you back in control! PeriCoach can be ordered directly at www.pericoach.com priced £145.00 plus post and packaging.



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